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Justice, State Departments Ignore Plight of American Children

***Elian Case Prompts Clinton/Gore Officials to
Shed Crocodile Tears for Parental Rights***

After meeting with the grandmothers of Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy rescued off the Florida coast on Thanksgiving Day, Attorney General Janet Reno (under whose authority INS operates) stated that **"the law recognizes the unique relationship between parent and child, and that family reunification has long been a cornerstone"** of both U.S. immigration law and INS practice [*Associated Press*, 1/22/00]. Similar sentiments were expressed by INS Commissioner Doris Meissner, who asked people to **"respect the bond between parent and child and respect the laws of the United States"** [*New York Times*, 1/6/00]. A resolution introduced by Democrats supporting the Clinton/Gore Administration's handling of the case even refers to the **"sacred bond"** between parent and child.

This sudden interest of Clinton/Gore officials and their Congressional supporters in upholding parental rights in Elian's case is a breathtaking departure from the overall thrust of Clinton Administration policy. As described in a statement issued by a spokesman for the Family Research Council:

"Since taking office in 1993, the Clinton administration has demonstrated a low regard for the rights of parents to guide their minor children. They immediately endorsed a sweeping national abortion bill (the so-called "Freedom of Choice Act") that would have nullified parental notification and consent bills in every state. They have promoted federally funded programs to distribute contraceptive drugs and devices to minors without parental knowledge, and they have sought to promote such parental circumvention internationally. On the critical issue of education, they have vehemently opposed proposals that would give parents greater choice in deciding where and how their children should be educated. In 1997, President Clinton even threatened to veto a major tax bill if it allowed parents to save their own money in tax-free education savings accounts for public or private education expenses." [Martin J. Dannenfelser, Vice President for Government relations, 1/27/00]

The Clinton Administration's newfound enthusiasm for parental rights in Elian's case sharply contrasts with this anti-family record. Moreover, "such touching concern for parental rights would be far more persuasive had this same Administration not sat on its hands in cases involving American mothers who have custody papers over their American-born children, but whose American children have been illegally kept from them by relatives living overseas," usually with the cooperation of foreign governments [*Wall Street Journal*, "The Grannies Gonzalez," editorial, 1/25/00]. As documented in a series of investigative reports in *Insight* magazine (a publication of the *Washington Times*), "both the State and Justice departments do little or nothing to recover these children and bring them home." ["Justice Ignores Stolen Kids," 11/29/99; see also "A Great Escape!", 2/14/00; "Kidnapped Kids Cry Out for Help," 5/10/99, and "Kids Held Hostage," 3/8/99.]

In one particularly shocking first-person account, an abducted and abused American girl relates how her mother was told by U.S. embassy officials in a foreign capital that if her daughter sought refuge there she would be returned to her captors [Dria Davis, "Elian, Here Is My Story," *Wall Street Journal*, 1/28/00]. Little Dria later escaped (without help from her government), but the Clinton/Gore Administration and their supporters evidently have little interest in vindicating the "sacred" parent/child bond for Americans.

Janet Reno Asks "If" — But the Cases Are Real

In comments following her meeting with Elian's grandmothers, Attorney General Reno expressed concern of possible "implications" for Americans if Elian remained in the United States:

"If we got into a situation where if American children ended up abroad and American parents wanted them returned and a foreign country made them a citizen so they did not return, I don't think people in the United States would be very happy about it." [CNN, 1/27/00]

In making the foregoing comment, the Attorney General is seemingly unaware that her handling of the Elian Gonzalez matter compares not to *hypothetical* but *actual* cases of abducted American citizen children, whom her department and the Clinton/Gore Administration as a whole have virtually abandoned. Even if the Attorney General is not personally acquainted with these cases, her subordinates in the FBI and the INS, as well as their colleagues at the State Department — as documented in the articles cited above — demonstrably are.

Contrary to the call by Ms. Reno's subordinate, Commissioner Meissner, that people "respect the laws of the United States," the question arises whether the Clinton/Gore Administration officials are really more concerned about respecting the desires of repressive foreign regimes. Or maybe the Clinton/Gore Administration's concern that American law be respected is less acute when the parents and children seeking protection are United States citizens.

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